



Testimony of
Ed Hawthorne, President
Connecticut AFL-CIO

Government Administration and Elections Committee
February 22, 2023

HB 5004 An Act Implementing Early Voting
SB 1057 An Act Concerning the Secretary of the State and Early Voting
SB 1064 An Act Concerning the Implementation of Early Voting
SJ 29 Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting
HJ 1 Resolution Approving a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting
HB 6693 An Act Concerning Absentee Voting

Good afternoon, Senator Flexer, Representative Blumenthal and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. My name is Ed Hawthorne, and I am proud to serve as the President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, a federation of hundreds of local unions representing more than 250,000 workers in the private sector, public sector, and building trades. Our members live and work in every city and town in our state and reflect the diversity that makes Connecticut great.

Thanks to the collective leadership of this committee, Connecticut voters had the opportunity, on November 8th, 2022, to improve access to the ballot box to ensure that everyone's voice is heard at election time. With a 60% majority, Connecticut is now the 47th state to allow Early Voting. No longer will voters have to make a choice between family and work obligations and their civic duty.

As you take on the efforts to implement Early Voting by finalizing proposed legislation, and as you prepare to vote on whether to adopt the proposed resolution to amend the state constitution to allow for No-Excuse Absentee Voting, and improving the absentee ballot counting process, I urge the committee to:

- ✓ Pass legislation that designs and fully funds Connecticut's first-ever Early in-person Voting system by March 2023. Doing so will provide election officials the time needed to integrate any budgetary changes well in advance of the 2023 municipal election cycle. Connecticut voters ought to have at least two weeks of Early Voting that includes weekend and evening hours and the necessary funding for higher population towns to provide multiple locations for voting.

- ✓ Adopt the proposed resolution for Connecticut to join 35 other states that allow for No-Excuse Absentee Voting during this 2023 legislative session. A required second approval by a simple majority in both chambers is needed. Doing this now will provide proponents and voters the time needed to educate the public and themselves about this initiative.
- ✓ Pass legislation that allows: (1) the municipal clerk to deliver absentee ballots to the ballot counters before or at six o'clock p.m. on the day of an election; (2) notification of voters whose absentee ballots may be rejected due to a defect so that voters can either correct it or vote in person; (3) prepaid postage for the return of absentee ballots; and (4) absentee ballot applications that have been completed and signed to be public records subject to public inspection.

Ensuring Connecticut's residents had the right to vote in safe, secure and accessible ways during the pandemic resulted in record-high voter participation, shorter lines at the polls and faster results. With all of the incentives to vote available in 2020, Connecticut ran one of its smoothest elections in recent history. Implementing an Early Voting structure that gives voters ample time to vote, the funding needed for larger municipalities to provide multiple polling locations, and the option to correct mistakes on absentee ballots, will finally provide the voter reforms necessary to ensure a true, robust democracy in Connecticut.

Thank you.